

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1 (currently amended):     ~~A~~A—~~S~~S*A* *Streptococcus thermophilus* bacterium which is resistant to attack by at least one bacteriophage and which comprises a modification of ~~the an  $\phi$ Sfi21 prophage or the bacterial chromosome, wherein the  $\phi$ Sfi21 prophage is modified by deletion of sufficient DNA to disrupt expression of the prophage in the bacterium.~~

Claim 2 (currently amended):     ~~A~~A—The bacterium according to claim 1 which is a strain of *S. thermophilus* selected from the group consisting of Sfi1 and Sfi1c16.

Claim 3 (currently amended):     ~~A~~A—The bacterium according to claim 1 wherein the bacterial chromosome is modified by addition of DNA.

Claim 4 (currently amended):     ~~A~~A—The bacterium according to claim 3 wherein the addition of DNA comprises a sequence of bases of *ISSI* or a functional equivalent thereof.

Claim 5 (currently amended):     ~~A~~A—The bacterium according to claim 3 wherein the bacterial chromosome comprises addition of DNA at at least one site chosen from the group consisting of ~~in~~ in ~~ORF 90~~ a site which disrupts expression of a chorismate mutase chain A gene, a site which disrupts expression of ~~the~~ a down-stream gene ORF394 and ~~in~~ in ~~ORF 269~~ at a site which disrupts expression of an oxidoreductase gene.

Claim 6 (canceled)

Claim 7 (currently amended):     ~~A~~A—The bacterium according to claim ~~6~~ 1 wherein the modification comprises a deletion of at least part of ORF1560.

Claim 8 (withdrawn): A method of preparing a *S. thermophilus* bacterium which has been mutated such that phage propagation with the bacterium is prevented comprising the steps of disrupting expression of the bacterial chromosome or the Sf121 prophage by mutating the chromosome by a step selected from the group consisting of inserting a DNA sequence and deleting a DNA sequence.

Claim 9 (currently amended): A composition ~~which comprises~~ comprising:  
a *S. Streptococcus thermophilus* bacterial strain, which has been mutated ~~in the bacterial chromosome or in the~~ a  $\phi$ Sf121 prophage genome; such that phage propagation within the bacterium is substantially prevented, wherein the mutation comprises deletion of sufficient DNA to disrupt expression of the prophage; and  
at least one component chosen from the group consisting of a carrier, adjuvant and diluent.

Claim 10 (currently amended): A starter culture comprising a *S. Streptococcus thermophilus* bacterial strain, which has been mutated ~~in the bacterial chromosome or in the~~ a  $\phi$ Sf121 prophage genome; such that phage propagation within the bacterium is substantially prevented, wherein the mutation comprises deletion of sufficient DNA to disrupt expression of the prophage.

Claim 11 (withdrawn): The method of claim 8 wherein a strain of *S. thermophilus* selected from the group consisting of Sf1 and Sf1c16.

Claim 12 (withdrawn): The method of claim 8 wherein the bacterial chromosome is modified by addition of DNA.

Claim 13 (withdrawn): The method of claim 8 wherein the addition of DNA comprises a sequence of bases of ISS1 or a functional equivalent thereof.

Claim 14 (withdrawn): The method of claim 8 wherein the bacterial chromosome is modified by addition of DNA in ORF90 at a site which disrupts expression of a chorismate mutase chain A gene or disrupts expression of the down stream gene ORF394.

Claim 15 (withdrawn): The method of claim 8 wherein the bacterial chromosome is modified by addition of DNA in ORF269 at a site which disrupts expression of an oxidoreductase gene.

Claim 16 (withdrawn): The method of claim 8 wherein the Sfi21 prophage is modified by deletion of sufficient DNA to disrupt expression of the prophage.

Claim 17 (withdrawn): The method of claim 8 wherein the modification comprises a deletion of at least part of ORF1560.

Claim 18 (currently amended): ~~A-The~~ composition according to claim 9 wherein a the strain of *S. thermophilus* is selected from the group consisting of Sfi1 and Sfi1c16.

Claim 19 (currently amended): ~~A-The~~ composition according to claim 9 wherein the bacterial chromosome is modified by addition of DNA.

Claim 20 (currently amended): ~~A-The~~ composition according to claim 9 wherein the  $\phi$ Sfi21 prophage is modified by deletion of ~~sufficient DNA to disrupt expression of the prophage at least part of ORF1560.~~

Claim 21 (currently amended): A milk product comprising a *SStreptococcus thermophilus* bacterial strain, which has been mutated in the bacterial chromosome or in the  $\phi$ Sfi21 prophage genome; such that phage propagation within the bacterium is substantially prevented, wherein the mutation comprises deletion of sufficient DNA to disrupt expression of the prophage.

Claim 22 (currently amended):     ~~A-The~~ starter culture according to claim 10 wherein ~~a-the~~ strain of *S. thermophilus* is selected from the group consisting of Sfi1 and Sfi1c16.

Claim 23 (currently amended):     ~~A-The~~ starter culture according to claim 10 wherein the bacterial chromosome is modified by addition of DNA.

Claim 24 (currently amended):     ~~A-The~~ starter culture according to claim 10 wherein the  $\phi$ Sfi21 prophage is modified by deletion of ~~sufficient DNA to disrupt expression of the prophage~~ at least part of ORF1560.

Claim 25 (currently amended):     ~~A-The~~ milk product according to claim 21 wherein ~~a-the~~ strain of *S. thermophilus* is selected from the group consisting of Sfi1 and Sfi1c16.

Claim 26 (currently amended):     ~~A-The~~ milk product according to claim 21 wherein the bacterial chromosome is modified by addition of DNA.

Claim 27 (currently amended):     ~~A-The~~ milk product according to claim 21 wherein the  $\phi$ Sfi21 prophage is modified by deletion of ~~sufficient DNA to disrupt expression of the prophage~~ at least part of ORF1560.

Claim 28 (new):     A *Streptococcus thermophilus* bacterial strain, wherein said strain is mutated in the bacterial chromosome or in the  $\phi$ Sfi21 phage genome such that phage replication within the bacterium is prevented,

wherein the bacterial chromosome comprises addition of DNA in ORF90 at a site which disrupts expression of a chorismate mutase chain A gene and/or disrupts expression of ORF394, or

wherein the  $\phi$ Sfi21 prophage is modified by deletion of sufficient DNA to disrupt expression of the prophage, wherein the mutation comprises a deletion to disrupt expression of ORF1560 of the  $\phi$ Sfi21 prophage.

Claim 29 (new): The *S. thermophilus* bacterial strain according to claim 28, wherein the bacterial strain of *S. thermophilus* is selected from the group consisting of Sfi1 and Sfi1c16.

Claim 30 (new): A composition comprising the *S. thermophilus* bacterial strain of claim 28, wherein said composition comprises the bacterium together with a carrier, adjuvant or diluent.

Claim 31 (new): The composition according to claim 30, which is a starter culture or milk product.

Claim 32 (new): The bacterium according to claim 5, wherein the site which disrupts expression of a chorismate mutase chain A gene and disrupts expression of the downstream gene ORF394 includes ORF90.

Claim 33 (new): The bacterium according to claim 5, wherein the site which disrupts expression of an oxidoreductase gene includes ORF269.